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ENVELOPE

(b)(3):10 USC 424,(b)(3):50 USC 3024(i)

HEADER

P
251806Z MAR 97
FM SSO DIA

STATE

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SECTION 1 OF 6

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BODY

SUBJ: DIA COMMONWEALTH ASSESSMENT 41-97/25 MAR 97

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{U} THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED
BY

DIA (b)(3):10 USC 424

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SOUTH AFRICA: UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR FORMER CBW DIRECTOR (U)
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UNRELATED TO CBW, PRESIDENT MANDELA PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED IN MARCH 1995 THAT SOUTH AFRICAN SCIENTISTS MAY HAVE BEEN WORKING IN LIBYAN CBW PROGRAMS WITHOUT GOVERNMENT APPROVAL FOLLOWING BASSON'S ARREST,

CHEMISTS INVOLVED IN PROJECT COAST BEGAN TO COOPERATE WITH AUTHORITIES BECAUSE OF CONCERN ABOUT WHAT BASSON MIGHT HAVE REVEALED

AT LEAST ONE CHEMIST CONFIRMED THAT SOUTH AFRICAN CW TECHNOLOGY WAS SOLD TO LIBYA WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MANDELA GOVERNMENT.

SALES

OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS TO IRAN AND IRAQ ALSO MAY HAVE OCCURRED.

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4. (U) BACKGROUND OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CBW PROGRAM. SOUTH AFRICA DEVELOPED ITS CBW PROGRAM WITH LITTLE OPEN FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.

ALTHOUGH SOUTH AFRICA HAS ADMITTED TO DEVELOPING A CBW DEFENSE PROGRAM, COAST WAS THE FOCUS FOR OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES USING THE 7TH

MEDICAL BATTALION AS ITS OPERATIONAL ARM. AS A BRIGADIER, DR BASSON ALSO COMMANDED THE 7TH MEDICAL BATTALION. ACCORDING TO A REPORT BY CIVILIAN DEFENCE SECRETARY PIERRE STEYN, THE 7TH MEDICAL SUPPLIED CHEMICAL POISONS TO ASSASSINS IN SADF HIT SQUADS AND USED CW AGAINST

MOZAMBIQUE LIBERATION FRONT (FRELIMO) TROOPS DURING THE MOZAMBIQUE CIVIL WAR IN THE LATE 1980S. STEYN WAS DIRECTED TO INVESTIGATE AND REPORT ON UNCONTROLLED VIOLENCE THAT OCCURRED IN PARTS OF SOUTH AFRICA AS APARTHEID WAS ENDING. BOTH PRESIDENT DE KLERK AND NELSON MANDELA RECEIVED THE REPORT BEFORE THE 1994 POSTAPARTHEID ELECTIONS.

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SECTION 6 OF 6

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SUBJ: DIA COMMONWEALTH ASSESSMENT 41-97/25 MAR 97

MANDELA'S OFFICE DEFENDED THE DECISION TO REHIRE BASSON STATING IT
WAS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST AND HAD IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH
AFRICA'S

NONPROLIFERATION OBLIGATIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

(b)(1),1.4 (c)

THE PROGRAM, HE DOUBTLESSLY MADE BACKUP DISKS THAT HE HAS IN
SAFEKEEPING AND IF THIS EXPERTISE FELL INTO THE WRONG HANDS, SAY A
TERRORIST GROUP, IT WOULD BE A DISASTER

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